



The  
Federal Government

# Evaluating the EU Missions – German Contribution

EU Missions were first introduced in the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe), including with German support. They enable **pressing societal challenges to be addressed in a cross-departmental and cross-sectoral approach**, and make the role of research and innovation more visible and transparent. The EU Missions underline at EU level the **impact-oriented approach** of Horizon Europe. **Germany expressly supports the goals of the five EU Missions** – Cancer, Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, Adaptation to Climate Change, Restore our Oceans and Waters, and Soil Deal for Europe.

While implementation is still in its early stages, areas of the EU-Missions are already coming to light in which challenges will arise in achieving their goals. Thus, to be able to exploit the full **potential of the EU Missions as a new policy instrument**, experience gained in their implementation should be incorporated into their further development and design. Some **realignment** is needed if the goals are to be achieved.

The European Commission scheduled an evaluation of the EU Missions for 2023 to highlight both the successes achieved and the obstacles faced in implementing the EU Missions, and enable their realignment to ensure implementation is both efficient and effective. With this paper, Germany wants to play an **active and constructive role in the ongoing EU process**.

Germany has pursued mission-focused approaches in its national research policy for a number of years. In the current Coalition Agreement for the 20th legislative period, missions are an integral component of the Federal Government's **Future Research and Innovation Strategy** ("Zukunftsstrategie Forschung und Innovation").

As set out in the Council conclusions of June 2022, effective governance of EU Missions should be based on a horizontal and vertical approach in line with the respective responsibilities. To accelerate implementation of the EU Missions at national level, the Federal Government under the leadership of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) has established a cross-departmental **governance structure for the EU Missions**. As part of that structure, the ministries primarily responsible for the thematic areas of the EU Missions assume responsibility for their respective success. With a wide range of **national activities** already in place, Germany is well positioned in the action areas covered by all five of the EU Missions. Efforts to bring both national and EU processes as well as regional ideas and activities together in an effective and resource-efficient way should thus be further strengthened.

A debate on **new EU Missions** and their potential areas of focus must only be opened once sufficient experience has been gained, an evaluation of the current EU Missions in Horizon Europe is available and appropriate funding has been secured. No new EU Missions should be defined while Horizon Europe is underway. Also, it should be made clear to stakeholders involved in the current missions that their efforts are appreciated, that the EU and its member states support the adopted approach, and want to make it a success.

## 1. Goals and monitoring

---

We welcome the **ambitious goals** of the EU Missions and their **clearly defined duration**. They send an appropriate political signal to the general public and help in reaching and motivating the respective stakeholders involved. Implementation of the five EU Missions is different in each case, hence they should each be viewed separately.

As of today, achieving the core goals of some EU Missions by 2023 would appear rather ambitious. It is important to communicate that also **partial successes** can help drive the transformation processes needed. **Best-practice examples** can also guide action and efforts to aid ongoing transformations. To afford the EU Missions greater credibility and acceptance, society must be informed about the interim status of goal achievement and of the implementational steps still needed and their relevance. Also, **greater coherence should be achieved between the core goals and the sub-goals for the various EU Missions**.

**Measuring target achievement should be focussed on.** When measuring the implementation status of an EU Mission, we recommend also using qualitative indicators which describe the degree of connectedness between stakeholders and levels, the multiplier effect and the achievements of the living labs and lighthouses. Given the impact-oriented nature of the EU Missions, in addition to research-specific indicators, methodological approaches will be needed along with other mission-specific **indicators for the missions' social impact**. We recommend prioritising the development of indicators and avoiding parallel survey and evaluation processes.

## 2. Synergies with other EU-level programmes and policy areas

---

Given their implementation focus, the EU Missions' goals go beyond research and innovation. **EU R&I activities are and can only be seen as a starting point**. For the EU Missions to be successful, it is essential that they be supported by non-R&I stakeholders and non-R&I funding programmes at national and EU level. Links with other policy areas at EU level must be strengthened.

The EU Missions should be given consideration in European Commission proposals for new **EU regulatory legislation and implementation acts**. The aim is to support achievement of the EU Missions' goals and use the expertise gained to assist legislative and reform processes in relevant policy areas. The members of the Mission Boards and stakeholders involved in mission-specific research and implementation should be involved as experts in designing draft legislation concerning the goals of the respective missions.

Effective implementation of the EU Missions must largely take place via collaboration between R&I and implementing stakeholders at national level. Up to now, the European Commission has not yet provided suitable strategies, overarching information, contact points and support to communicate consolidated information on existing and planned financing options at EU level beyond Horizon Europe. The implementing stakeholders (including those outside of science) need **guidance documents and target group-specific guidelines** in their respective language which clearly outline the programmes available for use in implementing the EU Missions. As set out in the Council's conclusions on the EU Missions, the European Commission should evaluate whether "labelling" of calls for expressions of interest that fall outside Horizon Europe might be introduced.

### 3. External visibility

---

Most EU Missions already achieved good visibility in Germany's political and scientific communities. In their areas of impact, the EU Missions have given rise to dialogue and exchange between the ministries involved.

**Visibility in the public sphere** on the other hand still remains lacking. This is a prerequisite for broad citizen engagement, which is a declared objective of the EU Missions. For certain EU Missions, the EU should better define the audience for which visibility is to be achieved and with what goals, develop suitable communication strategies and measures, and assist the member states in their communication efforts.

Alongside the EU Missions, a range of plans, programmes and funding measures are also in place at national and EU level which cover similar topics to the missions. Providing a detailed overview of all relevant measures and activities in a specific thematic area poses a challenge in some cases. Responsibility lies with the respective counterparts at national and EU level. The European Commission should create **opportunities for dialogue and exchange**, and make **communications material** available in the various EU languages for the different target groups in order to portray the effectiveness of the missions in a way that is aligned to the respective recipient groups. A broad public relations campaign could also increase the visibility of the EU Missions.

As excellent facilitators, the members of the Mission Boards can raise public awareness to the EU Missions on a broader scale. The role of the **members of the EU Mission Boards as ambassadors** for the respective missions should be enhanced.

Also, the **role played by R&I in implementing the EU Missions** must be better communicated and made clear. In addition, greater prominence must be given to the distinguishing criteria and the specific requirements for measures used in implementing the EU Missions as opposed to conventional Horizon Europe collaboration projects in Pillar II of Horizon Europe – such as cooperation with other initiatives, interdisciplinarity, stakeholder involvement and communication.

### 4. Financing

---

Achieving the EU Missions' goals will prove difficult using funding solely from Horizon Europe and the research and innovation programmes in the member states alone. Horizon Europe funding can only relate to the R&I aspects of the EU Missions. A check must thus be made as to which **other EU programmes outside of Horizon Europe** can be better used in implementing the missions.

Greater involvement of private sector financing should also be considered. The success of the EU Missions largely depends on **attracting private sector investment** and innovation. With their long-term commitment period, the EU Missions' goals help to provide **reliable conditions for matching investment** of the private sector. At both national and EU level, incentive strategies and also methodologies should be developed to attract private sector stakeholders and private sector capital for the EU Missions. This is where EU public-private partnerships, such as joint undertakings, could well serve as catalysts. Thus, for each EU Mission, we recommend developing and publishing suitable strategies to activate investors.

Missions are implementation and process oriented, and are long-term endeavours. Once the results of the missions' evaluation have been published, the task at hand will be to clarify whether and how the activities arising from the EU Missions can be continued in order to give participating stakeholders an outlook for the future. Among other things, this includes financing of the Living Labs and lighthouses once the timelines for these measures have expired.

## 5. Stakeholder communication

---

European Commission activities, responsibilities and planning in connection with the EU Missions need to be communicated in a transparent way. A better communications strategy is necessary which includes **examples of good transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary practices**. Establishment of contact points and active, coordinated communication of the various bodies are important. Some stakeholders and involved players needed for successful implementation have not been reached so far. We recommend clear and regular **communication of timelines, and the provision of information on identifying funding opportunities and applying for funding within and beyond Horizon Europe**. The information provided should ideally be consolidated in order to reduce the current fragmentation. It should actively address all relevant stakeholders, including those in the humanities and social sciences, and the arts.

The **work programme sections of the respective thematic clusters** in Pillar II of Horizon Europe should contain references to the mission calls for expressions of interest in the appropriate thematic areas. In turn, in the mission section of the work programme, references should be made to suitable topics in other programme sections and to EU partnerships.

Also, to a greater extent than has been the case to date, the **Mission Boards** should be informed actively about the status of implementation, the degree of goal achievement and any (funding) measures the European Commission has planned for the EU Missions and also be involved in its activities.

If sustainable communication channels are established between the various stakeholders involved in the missions, the **Coordination and Support Actions (CSA)** funded by the European Commission can promote cooperation, connectivity and the use of synergies. To further cooperation with national structures and activities, capacities within the European Commission should be increased.

**Cooperation with the member states**, such as on the strategic and thematic configuration of the Programme Committee and the EU Mission Working Groups, should be structured in relation to the **co-creation** approach. Stakeholders should be involved in the design process to draw on their expertise. To achieve successful implementation of the EU Missions, we welcome continued open dialogue and exchange on the design and further development of the EU Missions between the European Commission and the member states.

## Mission-specific section

### Adaptation to Climate Change

---

The Mission aims to support regions on their journey to become climate resilient by 2030. Achieving climate resilience is a long-term process. The goals of the EU Mission “Adaption to Climate Change” are well formulated, sufficiently specific and accommodate the open process dictated by the challenges faced.

With regard to a realignment of the Mission, we propose the following points:

- Opening the Mission Charter to other regions would be an important step. As a living and growing process, the Charter can have a signalling effect for the regions. Because the Mission Implementation Platform resources are limited, greater use could be made of large-scale support programmes, such as webinars, regional seminars and the community of practice approach.
- The Mission Working Group composed of member state representatives and which reports to the Strategic Programme Committee could be used more in depth as an expert group and idea-giver in developing the Mission further.
- Financing suitable measures to achieve climate resilience poses a huge challenge for regions and should be given greater focus in the future.
- Better integration of available regional and municipal climate data and of tools for use in adapting to climate change into the Mission would be beneficial and make them available to a wide user group.

National funding creates direct points of departure for the Mission, among them the development of a climate register as part of the BMBF measure on “Regional Information for Action on Climate Change”. Regular exchange takes place between the national ministries in, among others, the Interministerial Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change (“IMAA”) and the Standing Committee on Adaptation to the Consequences of Climate Change (“StA AFK”). We also hold regular informational events for regional actors, scientists and stakeholders.

### Cancer

---

The Cancer Mission places a clear focus on an extremely important subject. The parallel existence of the EU Beating Cancer Plan ensures that other policies support this focus area and various EU programmes aid its implementation. It also heightens visibility of the subject of cancer in the public eye. But this in turn means that the Cancer Mission is less clearly seen as a stand-alone initiative and it is thus less well perceived. That the two initiatives exist side-by-side results in a complex governance structure with various committees. Further clarification of responsibilities and better coordination is needed.

Despite the Mission’s quantified goals, improving the lives of three million cancer patients by 2030 is difficult to measure. This also applies for certain, rather broadly defined sub-goals, making it a challenge to evaluate target achievement.

We welcome the fact that the Mission’s work programme sets out specific topics for implementation in the implementation plan and cites a focus area for research and innovation activities. These aid knowledge acquisition, help in structuring the thematic areas and promote networking in the scientific community. They do not, however, differ to any great extent from health cluster calls for expressions of interest, meaning that the added value of the Cancer Mission’s approach is not readily apparent in certain topics.

With regard to boosting the Mission’s impact, we propose the following points:

- A better description is needed of the strategic portfolio approach and the specific, mission-related synergies with measures from other parts of the Horizon Europe programme, EU partnerships and other EU programmes. A cross-programme description of relevant calls and of the project portfolio would be desirable, while the creation of synergies and linkage should not be primarily required of the projects themselves.

- A better description of the links with other key EU initiatives such as the European Health Data Space and with national initiatives could lead to better understanding of the Cancer Mission. The national hubs will play an important role in supporting the Cancer Mission.
- Improving the Mission's visibility beyond professional circles should be made an integral component of the implementation strategy.

With its National Decade against Cancer and National Cancer Plan, Germany has already made cancer a priority, thereby helping to strengthen the Cancer Mission.

## Restoring our Oceans and Waters (Mission Starfish)

---

Germany supports implementation of the Mission to Restore the Health of our Oceans and Waters. However, the Mission's overarching goal and also its lighthouse goals are formulated vaguely. They also seem rather ambitious for the period up to 2030. Against the backdrop of the successes achieved so far and the recently launched EU projects in Mission Starfish, realignment is recommended – not least as regards measurability of the expected results.

With regard to Mission realignment, we propose the following points:

- **Visibility:** Especially where stakeholders from outside the EU framework programme are concerned, the Restore our Waters and Oceans Mission is not yet sufficiently visible or known, especially at regional and local levels in Germany. And in many cases, the benefits of the Oceans Mission are not always clear for stakeholders. The launch of the CSA BlueMissionBANOS and the Mission Baltic and North Sea Lighthouse event in Hamburg on 25-26 April 2023 were important events which significantly increased Mission visibility in Germany and in the Baltic Sea/North Sea region.
- **Governance:** With the lighthouses and the HEU-funded projects from the Mission's work programme, an implementing structure was created at the beginning of 2023. Interaction with the European Commission, especially at member state level, and a clear division of roles and responsibilities have yet to be adequately implemented. Cooperation between the European Commission and the Oceans Mission Subgroup provides an important basis for this work. Better dovetailing with activities conducted as part of the UN Ocean Decade continues to be desirable.
- **Transparency:** Communication between the European Commission and the member states could be improved to achieve greater transparency. Improvement is especially needed when it comes to coordinating funding topics and calls for expressions of interest. Linkage with the EU partnerships (e. g. Sustainable Blue Economy, Water4All, Zero Emission Waterborne Transport, and Clean Energy Transition) could also be further improved.
- **Timeline:** Missions are designed with a long-term perspective. Germany believes it is challenging for the Oceans Mission to meet its goals by 2030. Because the Mission's implementing structure has only just been established, a plan for activities to continue beyond 2030 should be developed. In addition, thought must be given to whether and in which capacity the Lighthouse CSAs will play a role beyond 2025 given that they assist the European Commission in implementing both the lighthouses and the Mission itself.



## Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities

---

The Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission is shaped by clear and transparent goals. By 2030, 100 European cities are to be climate neutral or provide credible proof that they are on the right path. The experience gained by participating local authorities should then help to provide guidance for other cities in the EU to become climate neutral by 2050. The implementation level for the Cities Mission is thus the city, its locally effective administrative processes and financing opportunities, with parallel integration into regional and national legislative frameworks, for example. The Mission is in line with the climate neutrality goals of the Federal Government (up to 2045) and the EU (up to 2050).

For the European Commission to provide further impetus for the Cities Mission, we propose the following:

- Support for cities via the Mission's NetZeroCities platform is of key importance, and could be further expanded. More feedback from the cities should be taken up, for example on designing the climate city contracts, as these require great administrative effort. The importance and the benefits of the climate city label could be communicated more clearly. The number of city advisors who advise the individual cities could be increased. Consideration should also be given to how NetZeroCities can intensify collaboration between the respective member states.
- The EU could make the Cities Mission more visible for the general public – perhaps in the form of a campaign covering all EU Missions to ensure broad society is aware of them and engages with the idea.
- The supportive role of research and innovation in implementing the Cities Mission should be communicated in a transparent way. Practice has shown that in some cases issues concerning planning and financing, and also the legal framework, are more important than developing or acquiring new knowledge.

- The EU Commission funds both the NetZeroCities platform and also collaborative projects to generate knowledge and disseminate innovations that can benefit the Cities Mission. Responsibility for implementing the Cities Mission goals lies first and foremost at national level. In addition, the funding opportunities available via the EU – especially the Structural Fund – and EIB programmes should be highlighted and, where appropriate, integrated more directly into the Cities Mission.

In Germany, the Cities Mission is managed by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) acting as co-lead as part of a national monitoring process. The challenges faced by the nine German cities participating in the Cities Mission are discussed with the responsible ministries in regular steering forum meetings. Germany already has a broad portfolio of programmes in place to support local authorities. The suitability or 'fit' of existing funding programmes is discussed with city representatives and, where appropriate, new forms of support, monitoring and accompaniment are developed and jointly agreed.



## Soil Deal for Europe

---

Healthy soil is essential to life on land. Good quality soil is of key importance for functioning habitats, biodiversity conservation, in mitigating and adapting to climate change, securing food supply, and providing biogenic resources and numerous other ecosystem services. At the same time, in many respects soil is still not sufficiently focussed on by policy, research and the public. As a result, the services provided by and the importance of soil are rarely appreciated. The Federal Government therefore welcomes both the introduction and implementation of the Soil Mission.

The Soil Mission is guided by eight qualitative goals, all of them well-chosen and appropriately implemented to bring the 100 living labs and lighthouses located around Europe into focus. Currently, however, their contribution in achieving the Mission's qualitative goals is not always sufficiently clear. The Mission also needs the methodologies and indicators to measure the progress made in achieving its goals.

To boost the Mission's impact and ensure its goals are met, we propose the following points:

- The broad range of topics around soil harbours vast potential for research and innovation. Maintaining healthy and restoring degraded soil in Europe calls not just for action at research funding level, but at other levels and in other areas as well.
- The interplay between the Horizon Europe Mission on Soil with policymaking, legislation, practice, education and many other areas also calls for soil to be given greater weighting. How will the Soil Mission interact with the likes of the planned Soil Health Law, the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the Common Agricultural Policy from 2028 onwards?

In Germany, a wide range of measures are currently being implemented or planned for use in achieving the Soil Mission goals. These measures were summarised in the first Roadmap on Implementing the Soil Mission in Germany (“Roadmap zur Umsetzung der Boden-Mission in Deutschland”). Led by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), the participating ministries have also established a “National Steering Forum on the Soil Mission” (“Nationales Lenkungsforum für die Boden-Mission”). The forum serves as a platform for dialogue and exchange between relevant stakeholders to assist the implementation of the Soil Mission.

